323 The jar, still soft and wet, is put on one side. Now is the time to decorate it with very simple designs, generally triangular, after which the industrious worker leaves it to dry for a few hours, taking care to cover the opening with a thin piece of wood to prevent the wind from spoiling the shape. As soon as she dares to lift it without danger, she turns it over, smooths the bottom (tshaku), which will harden in its turn, and places the

Constructing the furnace. *Phot. A. Borel.*

pot in a hut where it continues to dry in the shade. On the day she chooses for the firing, she digs a hole in the sand, arranges the various pieces of pottery in it and covers them with a heap of small pieces of wood or with palm pith ; this she sets alight, and keeps a quick clear fire burning until she considers the firing is finished, when she leaves her red and glowing utensils to cool down
323 (hola). The cooling accomplished, she begins to inspect the
386 result of her work. This is the psychological moment! How many have cracked, how many have withstood the testing? The worthless ones are smashed, and the perfect ones reserved to be

painted a brilliant brown, which is done with a decoction of the bark of the mangrove (nkapa) and of the nkanye, boiled with a kind of creeper (mahlehlwa), which has a sticky sap. Such is the primitive method followed in the manufacture of all Native pottery. 323 386

The process of firing being often unsuccessful, taboos are plentiful in the manufacture. When women collect the clay, 323 777

The furnace ready. Phot. A. Burel.

only one of them digs and gives it to the others ; should each make haste to dig for herself, this would bring mishap : the pots would break. If no accident happens and the firing is successful, these women will say : "She who dug the other day has a lucky hand (a ni boko dja bombe). Let her dig again another time." When the clay has been hidden in the ground, at the foot of a tree, it is also taboo to tread on the spot, when walking through the village. When the heap of wood is ready, the potteress will call a little child, an innocent creature, to set fire to the furnace. She shows it where to place the glowing ember,

II. *Basket-work.*

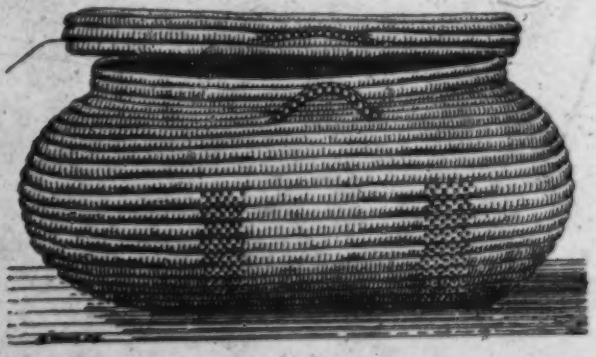
The milala palm, whose sap supplies the tipplers of Pessene with 137
their famous busura (II. p. 42), is a very valuable tree to the 285
Ba-Ronga, as it is of its leaves that the greater part of the baskets in use by this tribe are made. The basket-maker gathers the most perfect leaves. These are not like the mimale folioles, growing opposite one another on a central nerve. The *milala* (plur. of nala) are true palms, the leaves consisting of folioles from half an inch to an inch in width radiating from a common centre, which itself grows on the end of a long pedunele.

These trees are found in the woods of Mabota, Nondwane, Tembe, on the Coast, and in the low plains of the North Eastern Zoutpansberg, etc., sometimes in large numbers. Returning 285
home, the workman (here we employ the masculine, basket-making being essentially man's work) spreads out the leaves in the sun to dry, having previously straightened the folioles somewhat, separating (hangela) them one from the other ; when they dry, they turn a light grey colour with a shining polished surface, and are then hung up in the hut where they will be sheltered from the dew and ready for use. When the work is to be started, the folioles are torn (phatlula) from their peduncle, and, with a sharp pointed instrument, are split longitudinally into strips or straws of 1/8 or 2/8 of an inch wide, the ribs of the leaves (nhlamalala, yin-tin) being carefully kept ; these delicate wands have their special use.

The Ronga basket makers are very fond of decorating their 285
baskets with *designs in black*. These triangular and square 531
patterns are produced by artistically plaiting dark and light 386
coloured straws, and are not painted on after the baskets are manufactured. The straw is dyed black in the following manner : it is soaked in the black ooze (ntjhaka) of the marshes for two weeks, and then laid out to dry, which gives it a reddish-brownish colour. This hue is deepened by a second treatment. The leaves of a shrub called *mpsabutimu* are gathered and placed in a

pot with the red brown milala in alternate layers, until the utensil is full : water is then poured over them and the whole put on to boil ; very soon the straw becomes a brilliant black. The basket-maker has now only to pull up some of the grass growing in the hollow near the lake, dry it, and he is ready to commence work.

In the accompanying plates illustrations will be found of the principal specimens of this art, stereotyped shapes which have passed on from generation to generation, doubtless from



Ngula.

prehistoric times, and are called respectively : *ngula*, *huvama*, *shihundju*, *lihlelo* and *nhluto*.

The *ngula* (yin-tin) (p. 27) takes the place of honour, and is the most prized of all the Ronga baskets. It requires days or even weeks of continuous work to make one, but the result is worthy of the time and labour bestowed upon it ; I brought with me to Europe several *ngula* of various sizes. The particular one shown below, is oval and measures six feet two inches in circumference ; but there are many much larger, both spheroid and ovoid. This is how they make or, to use the technical Native term, "tlhaba" — "pierce" this basket. The workman takes his dried grass and plaits it, lengthening the plait according to requirements, as he goes along : this plait is bound round, and entirely hidden, by a special binding of palm leaf straw, thus forming a thickish cord of about half an inch in diameter ; the cord is soon doubled back upon itself, and forms a centre, around which